

North Carolina Department of Transportation's Standard Practice for Gateway Signs

The purpose of this standard practice is to establish guidelines for gateway signing at or near municipal limits, county lines, or community limits along North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) roadways. This practice allows municipalities and counties the flexibility to integrate Context Sensitive components that depict their character or identity on transportation facilities. While the Department's first priority is to provide safe and efficient facilities, it understands that this can be accomplished by ensuring environmental sensitivity while providing transportation infrastructure that is integrated into the natural and human environment in a manner to reflect the local community's aesthetic values and intrinsic qualities. To ensure successful integration of gateway signing, it is critical to maintain collaborative and cooperative partnerships with local and county governments and communities with a preference to install all gateway signs outside of state right of way.

CRITERIA

1. The preference of the Department is to have all gateway signs installed outside of the right of way. However, as a last resort, the Department will allow gateway signs within the right of way only if signs are crashworthy and located in an area deemed safe by the Division Engineer.
2. Gateway signs for unincorporated communities shall be processed through the County and said County will accept all responsibility for this signing.
3. Signs located on sculptures, brick masonry, and other obstructions must be installed outside of the clear recovery zone along the perimeter of the roadway. To avoid potential safety hazards, the requesting agency will be required to place proposed gateway signing as far from the travel lane as possible and outside the clear recovery area. The agency shall provide a traffic safety analysis that is sealed by a licensed Professional Engineer to certify that clear recovery zone distance requirements are maintained and that the selected sign location will not introduce and expose road users to undue risks. Clear zone and lateral object setbacks shall be determined using appropriate American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards from the most current edition of the AASHTO Roadside Design Guide.
4. Requests for gateway signs should be directed to the appropriate Division Engineer. Each request shall include the required traffic safety analysis, a plan clearly showing requested sign locations and messages (layouts), and sign support designs for each location included. The Division Engineer will use this information when evaluating the request for roadway signs and will determine whether the request is approved. All slogans, emblem designs, and any official seal to be displayed on any gateway sign shall be reviewed and approved by the Division Engineer. Signs requested for installation on freeways will be approved by the Transportation Mobility and Safety Division. Gateway signs should be directed to the appropriate Division Engineer and shall include required traffic safety analysis.
5. All costs associated with administration, design, fabrication, erection, inspection, relocation, and maintenance of any approved gateway sign will be the responsibility of the county/municipality/community. An encroachment agreement, written and executed by the Division Office, is required.

6. Gateway signs shall be erected at or near the municipal boundary/limits at locations approved by the Department. Only one installation of a gateway signing or sign assembly is permitted per direction of roadway.
7. The sign support system for gateway signs located within the roadway clear recovery zone (determined by a private licensed Professional Engineer) shall be break-away, yielding in design, or crashworthy.
8. If the approved sign request is not being implemented by the municipality forces, the requester will be required to hire and pay a pre-qualified private contractor that is approved by the Department and licensed to work in North Carolina, to install and/or maintain the signs. All materials and workmanship must comply with the Department's current Standard Specifications for Roads and Structures. Traffic control shall be in accordance with the MUTCD, North Carolina Supplement to the MUTCD, and current NCDOT Roadway Standard Drawings.
9. Overhead installation of gateway signing shall not be permitted.
10. If a Division Engineer determines it is acceptable to allow a sign installation where a utility requires relocation, all work, coordination, and costs will be the responsibility of the requester.
11. This practice is not intended for use in removal of existing signs; however, when a new project is established for the North Carolina highway system, or when existing signs are in need of replacement, repair, or maintenance, conformance with this practice is required.
12. The Department reserves the right to cover, relocate, or remove any signs for maintenance or construction operations, or when deemed to be in the best interest of the Department or the traveling public, without advance notice. The Department reserves the right to remove signs when roadway improvements or changes in the roadway cross section or configuration will no longer accommodate the existing signs. If the need to remove or relocate a gateway sign is due to construction or maintenance activities, the associated cost is the responsibility of the requester.
13. Gateway signs shall not be installed at or near decision making areas such as exit directional, exit gore, route split, lane drop, etc.
14. If signs are not maintained properly by requester, the Department will remove and bill requester all costs associated in sign removal.
15. Gateway signs shall not obstruct roadway sight distance or resemble a traffic control device.
16. Gateway signs placed in the right of way shall not advertise services or sponsorships.
17. If gateway signs require lighting or irrigation, installations must follow existing policies and standards on lighting and irrigation. Lighting maybe prohibited if it creates a safety hazard.
18. As described in General Statute 136-30 (a), (b), and (d), the Department has the authority to control all signs within the right-of-way of the State Highway System.

§ G.S. 136-30. Uniform signs and other traffic control devices on highways, streets, and public vehicular areas. (a) State Highway System. - The Department of Transportation may number and mark highways in the State highway system. All traffic signs and other traffic control devices placed on a highway in the State highway system must conform to the Uniform Manual. The Department of

Transportation shall have the power to control all signs within the right-of-way of highways in the State highway system. The Department of Transportation may erect signs directing persons to roads and places of importance. (b) Municipal Street System. - All traffic signs and other traffic control devices placed on a municipal street system street must conform to the appearance criteria of the Uniform Manual. All traffic control devices placed on a highway that is within the corporate limits of a municipality but is part of the State highway system must be approved by the Department of Transportation. (d) Definition. - As used in this section, the term "Uniform Manual" means the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways, published by the United States Department of Transportation, and any supplement to that Manual adopted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation.